



MATTERS OF OPINION



Terry Steinwand
Director

This is my inaugural Matters of Opinion column for *North Dakota OUTDOORS*. As most readers likely know, Dean Hildebrand has retired after nearly 10 years as Game and Fish Director. I was honored to accept Governor John Hoeven's appointment as director and look forward to a diverse and interesting journey in fish and wildlife management.

I've read that our ethics, conscience, values and many of our abilities are formed at an early age. So, by providing some background, you might better understand where I'm coming from on a myriad of issues.

I grew up on a grain farm east of Garrison in McLean County, about 70 miles northwest of Bismarck. I owe much of what I am now to my parents, who often sacrificed to make sure I could lead a good and productive life. While the primary income on our small farm was small grains, there were also cattle, chickens, hogs, ducks, geese – all sorts of animals. I often joke with Dad that it wasn't until I went away to college that he finally switched from milk cows to range cattle.

We also had small, square bales to haul and rocks to pick by hand and no cab on the tractor. It seemed to me that all the amenities, like a tractor cab, mechanical rock picker, large round bales, and so on, were all purchased after I left home. Interesting.

Early on, I developed an intense love for the outdoors, much of it fostered by my father's interest in hunting. I also developed a love for fishing because of a grizzly old neighbor who found the time to take me fishing, which is something I've never forgotten. Some of my favorite memories were watching ducks and geese on our sloughs in spring, and picking through bugs found in those same waters. Or going out and watching a killdeer do its "dance" to keep me away from its nest. Those experiences helped me develop an interest and curiosity about nature and animals in general.

I attended high school in Garrison. My first coach was Pat McNally, now the athletic director at Minot High School. He taught me that no matter how small you are, the size of your heart will help you succeed. I owe him a great deal. And I'll never forget Bert Gums, my high school wrestling coach, who taught me the value of hard work and persistence.

After high school, I left for the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks and developed a good case of culture shock. I had good grades in high school, but with only 20-25 kids in each class, one-on-one time with the teacher was optimal. My first college class had 150 students, and I think it took me two weeks to get over it. I did earn a bachelor's degree in biology and ultimately a master's degree. I made many friends, and learned as much from them as from the books.

My first job in the fish and wildlife field was with a graduate student studying fish parasites in the James and Sheyenne rivers. Although it was a fun job, it wasn't something I wanted to do for the rest of my life. More important was the contacts I made with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, which helped secure my first temporary position with the agency.

I started full-time with the Department in 1982 as the Garrison Diversion biologist, and became fisheries chief in 1989.

This agency faces many challenges in the future, and will also have many opportunities to improve our outdoor resources. As director, I look forward to working with all of you on fish and wildlife issues. I recognize that we won't always agree, but rest assured that I will always do what's right for the fish and wildlife resources of North Dakota, and the people who use them.